



Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children



HOW A POOR ORPHAN BOY MADE A GREAT FORTUNE IN A FOREIGN LAND WITH THE APPARENTLY WORTHLESS THINGS LEFT HIM BY HIS FATHER, AFTER HIS UNCLE HAD TRIED TO KILL HIM AND STEAL HIS VERY VALUABLE PROPERTY

WHEN Martin Brough's father died his Uncle Amos called him into the dining room and said:

"Now, my poor lad, your father is no more, and he has left you almost nothing. Everything has gone to pay the doctors. What did your pa say to you before he passed away?"

"He told me," replied Martin, "that he had little to leave me. His old umbrella he asked me always to carry wherever I went, but I don't remember anything else."

"Well, there's about five thousand yards of blue mosquito netting that he took in trade, and the little farm up on the hill, but it's too stony and dry to grow anything on, and you couldn't even give it away, still less raise money on it. That's all, except a bottle of peroxide of hydrogen that's never been opened," added Uncle Amos, who was a bald-headed old curmudgeon, and who hated Martin because he had a good appetite.

"Oh, what shall I do?" asked the boy.

"I should advise you to go to sea until you're grown up," said his uncle. "I have arranged it all with Captain Scuppers, an old friend of mine, who loves boys, and he will take you on his ship, which is called the Cheery Turtle, of Newark, N. J. You'll get plenty of fresh air and exercise, which are good for boys."

Martin liked the name of the ship, and said he would go. In less than an hour after his father was buried he was on board of the Cheery Turtle, and Captain Scuppers was saying farewell to his Uncle Amos. Now, these men had made a bargain, and the captain had agreed to throw Martin overboard somewhere in the Gulf Stream, for Uncle Amos had discovered that there was oil on the stony farm, and he wished the boy out of the way, so that he could have all the fortune to himself. Therefore he promised to pay Scuppers for disposing of his nephew. The bald-headed old villain was willing to share the fortune with another rascal, but not with his own nephew.

TRIED TO KILL THE CAPTAIN

Soon the ship was at sea, and Martin certainly got all the fresh air and exercise he needed, for there was much for the cabin boy to do on that ship. He had to wait on Captain Scuppers, shine his shoes, wind all the watches and clocks, feed the dog and cat, splice the mainbrace, polish the anchor, grind the coffee, dust all the bric-a-brac, sweep the deck, make the fire, as well as do all that the crew asked him to do beside, and when the captain and the men in calm weather were fishing poor Martin was obliged to sit and watch the barometer to see that it didn't fall suddenly just before a storm. Still, he was happy and contented, for he had been allowed by Captain Scuppers to take along the mosquito netting, which he hoped to sell in foreign lands. Of course he brought the old umbrella and also the bottle of peroxide of hydrogen, as they were all that he owned.

When the Cheery Turtle had been at sea many days without hearing any land the crew began to murmur. They declared that the captain had lost his reckoning, which was true, for he had carelessly allowed it to blow away in a gale one day, and didn't know how to make another. Old Olaf Swineson, the Swede, and Porcupinopoulos, the Greek, two sailors who had once been pirates of the Main, began to incite the crew to mutiny, asserting that they were lost and would never get home.

Soon the whole crew were rebellious, but as the captain was a savage and dangerous man, they dared not openly revolt, so the Greek prepared a terrible dose for him. It was a mixture composed of germs of many diseases—typhoid fever, chills, measles, pty, hives, smallpox, rheumatism and mumps, all these awful germs being hidden in a paste of flour, and they ordered Martin to slip it into the bread which the cook was baking for the captain. He refused to do this terrible deed, of course, and the angry men threatened to have revenge.

They gave the dreadful mess to the captain themselves, and, after eating the bread, he was immediately taken very ill with all the different diseases at once. He tried to learn from his doctor's book what ailed him, but he had so many different symptoms that he was confused and alarmed, and took to his bed, expecting to die at once. Martin nursed the captain, and, knowing just what germs he had taken, he was able to give him the separate medicines for each disease, so that, in spite of the crew's evil designs, he cured him, although it took all the medicine on board. The captain was very grateful, and he told Martin of the plot formed by his Uncle Amos, for he was now sorry. He said that he wouldn't throw the lad overboard, but instead would assist him to sell his mosquito netting at a profit at the first port they visited.

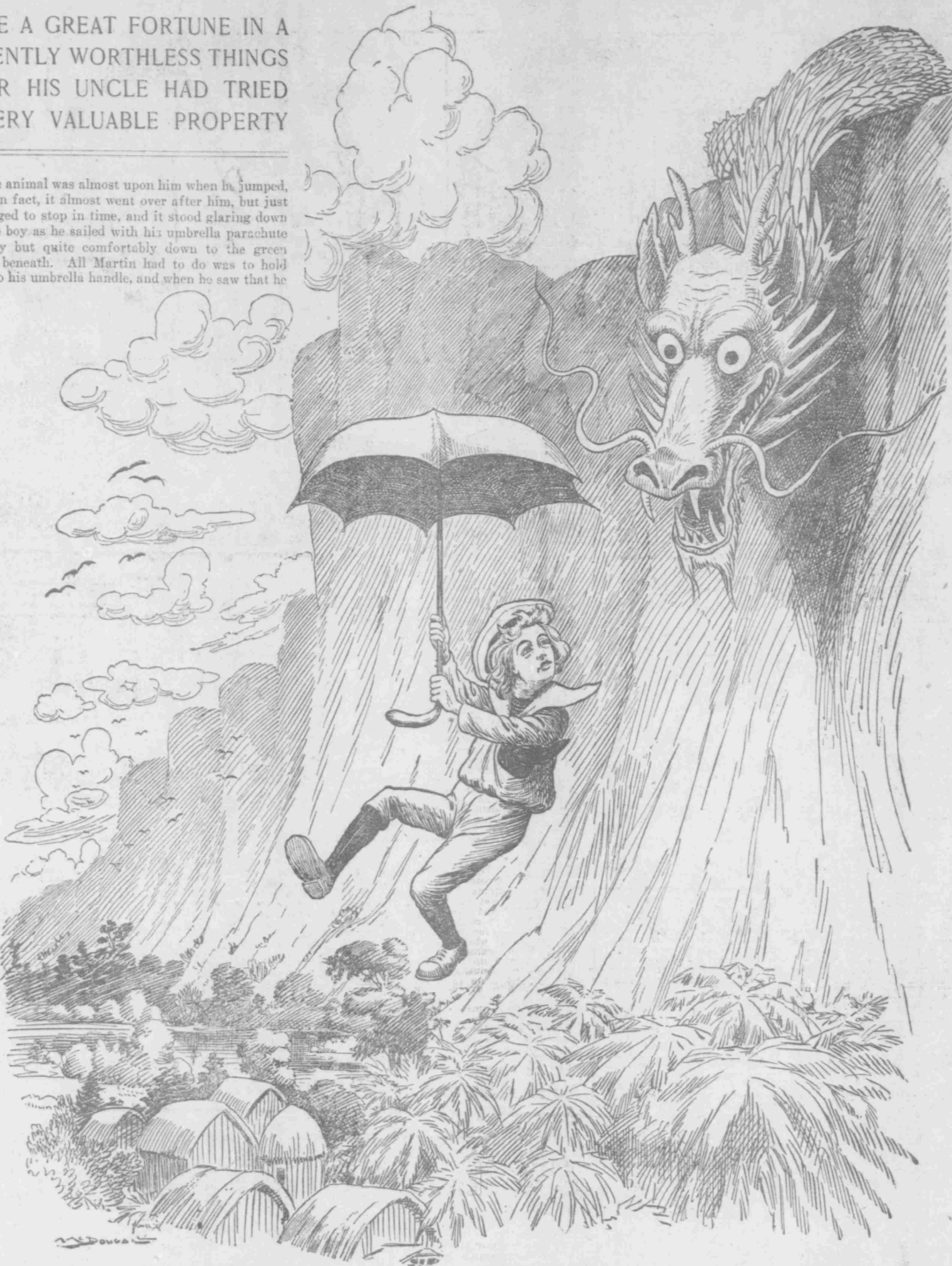
But the crew, enraged at the captain's recovery, resolved to thwart him, and when they neared a strange land, the coast of which was deserted and desolate, they put Martin in a boat, with all of his belongings, and left him on the dreary shore. Then they sailed away, while Martin sat on his bales of mosquito netting and wept bitterly.

SAVED BY HIS UMBRELLA

Soon, however, he braced up and resolved to explore the country. He took his umbrella and started into the interior. The land rose gradually, being a sandy desert, and he mounted up and up, seeing nothing of interest until finally he came to an abrupt precipice a mile high. Looking over its edge, he saw far below a forest-covered plain, where among the waving green of the palms and rubber trees villages nestled beside purling brooks. How to get there was the problem, for there was apparently no way to descend the steep cliff. He walked for a mile or more along the edge, and was in despair, when he heard a distant noise.

Looking back, he saw far away a huge and awful-looking creature, with its nose to the ground, plainly tracking its footsteps like a bloodhound. He was terrified and began to run wildly along the edge of the precipice. The creature perceived him and started for him. Poor Martin, seeing that it would surely get him in another minute, saw but one way of escape. He opened his big umbrella, which was one of the old-fashioned kind, with heavy steel ribs and stout silk.

The animal was almost upon him when he jumped, and, in fact, it almost went over after him, but just managed to stop in time, and it stood glaring down at the boy as he sailed with his umbrella parachute swiftly but quite comfortably down to the green plain beneath. All Martin had to do was to hold fast to his umbrella handle, and when he saw that he



MARTIN LEAPED FROM THE PRECIPICE JUST AS THE ANIMAL WAS ABOUT TO SEIZE HIM

was getting along so nicely he lost all fear, and only wondered where he would land. He could see the awful head far above, its eyes still glaring down at him, but soon he sailed down to a sort of park and alighted in front of a palace of bamboo thatched with leaves of the cocoanut palm.

LONG HAired NATIVES

Hundreds of dark-skinned natives came running to him, armed with bows and arrows, spears and knives, for they thought he was a big bird of some new species, but when they saw it was a human being they were filled with awe and bowed down before him, for now they imagined he was a new sort of angel, you see. They shouted for their king to come and welcome Martin, and when King Gumbo Okra came and was told that Martin had come sailing down from the sky he was very polite indeed. He was a big man, with hair that reached nearly to the ground, long, black tresses that almost hid him from view. In fact, all of the natives had very long hair, and when Martin had been there a short time he learned that the tribe was called the "Long-haired Umpivallagas," and that their hair was long because there grows in that region a weed called "hair-weed," the seeds of which are as fine as powder and which cause the hair to grow awfully fast. The seed blows all over the region, and, of course, gets into the hair upon their heads, and sometimes even on their bodies, so that some of them are as hairy as gorillas. Martin determined to get a supply of this hairseed to take home to Uncle Amos, who was about as bald as a pool-ball, and who was dreadfully ashamed of it, too.

Martin was escorted to the royal palace, in front of which he had alighted, which was lucky, for it made the king think he had come to visit him personally, and there he was feasted, while musicians played wild and weird melodies on drums, fiddles, banjos and trumpets all made of gourds, while native maidens danced before him and sang ragtime songs. All around the king's leaf-thatched palace grew strange trees laden with fruit, while the perfume of flowers filled the air. Brightly plumaged birds darted in and out of the shadows like flying jewels, carolling in a thousand tones, and fountains flashed among the rocks everywhere, cooling the hot air and making a dreamy music the while that made one sleepy and languorous. But over all was a steady, droning hum that could be heard constantly through all the music, and songs and laughter, and, after trying in vain to discover whence it came, Martin asked the king to inform him. The monarch replied: "You'll find out, alas, by dark what it is, but I will tell you. It's mosquitoes, that's what, and they are fierce! They simply eat us at night, although they never come down to the earth in the daytime."

"All the mosquitoes I know about," said Martin, "always stay down on the ground daytimes and fly mostly by night."

"Perhaps these are new to you, but they are an old story to us," said Gumbo. "If it were not for them, life here would be one perpetual picnic. They are as big as bumblebees," he added, "and fierce as wolves."

"It would seem that I have arrived at the right place," said Martin. "You need no longer give yourself any uneasiness regarding these insects, for I have the cure for them."

"Where is it? Show it to me!" cried King Gumbo. "If you can show me how to reach the seashore, where I left my bundles," said Martin, "I will be pleased to attend to all the rest."

In two minutes after Martin had told him where he had left his netting the king had dispatched a number of porters to bring it all to the palace. Although the distance was considerable, they soon returned, bearing the many bundles on their heads, and one of them carried with much care the bottle of peroxide of hydrogen, which he regarded as magical, having never before seen a glass bottle, and thinking the contents were alive.

"Is this the cure?" asked the king, taking the bottle carefully.

"No. That is only a chemical stuff that they use to bleach hair. The mosquito cure is in the bundles your men are carrying."

"Let me see it at once!" cried the eager monarch.

Martin untied one of the bales and displayed the blue stuff to the king. He thought, of course, that there must be some magical quality about it, never having even heard of mosquito nets, for they did not have them in the land of the Umpivallagas. He was rather afraid to touch it, and when Martin explained that it was to be put over the windows and doors he still imagined that it was all magic.

SAVED FROM MOSQUITOES

Martin hurried in his anxiety to have at least some of the rooms well protected, for after what he had heard of the native mosquitoes he was mightily alarmed, as he had never seen them larger than horseflies, and these were as big as bumblebees, you remember.

It was dark before he had covered all the windows and doors of the palace, and supper was ready, but before they had eaten the meal the buzzing and humming had come nearer and nearer, and finally, with a grand chorus of hums, the mosquitoes swooped down upon the village as usual. All the inhabitants wrapped themselves up in their long hair and tried to sleep as best they could, but the slapping could be heard all through the village, except in King Gumbo's palace, where all was lovely.

The king sat there and listened to the disappointed mosquitoes gnashing their teeth as they butted their heads against the stout netting and buzzed in rage, and he smiled in delight. Not one mosquito got into the palace, and the monarch's joy was so great that in the morning he presented Martin with a flour bag filled with purest gold dust and seven pearls as big as walnuts, each one priceless and all worth an immense fortune.

ANOTHER PRIZE FOR THE KING

Then Martin, with the assistance of many workers, stopped the windows of all of the larger houses and completely used up all of his netting. Many of the people presented him with gifts of ivory, gold and pearls also, and the king ordered that all those whose houses had not been fitted with nets should be allowed to go and sleep in the houses that were mosquito-proof, so that when the mosquitoes came the next night they actually found not one human being to attack. Their rage was simply terrific, and their buzzing was so loud that nothing could be heard at all beside. They flew frantically through the village stabbing at everything, and in the morning hundreds were found sticking to trees which they had attacked in their blind fury. These were all as thin as possible, showing that they had found nothing to feed upon that night, and all the natives were so delighted that a grand holiday was kept, during which nothing but dancing, singing and feasting was done, and Martin was the hero of the hour.

Gifts were showered upon him by the humblest as well as the richest, and he had a fortune in gold dust alone.

During the day he told King Gumbo about the fierce animal that had pursued him, and the king said at once that they were all very much afraid of it and that it was called the Wampangus. It dwelt in a remote mountain cave, but occasionally came down to the plains and devoured the people living there. The last time it had appeared it had got his own brother Oogoo and ate him in one gulp, for it had a mouth as big as a door. Its hide was too tough for arrows, he said, and it was so fleet of foot that no one could catch it, anyhow.

"What's the matter," asked the king, "with giving it some of that stuff in your bottle?"

"Oh, that wouldn't kill him," replied Martin.

"That's for coloring the hair."

"What color does it make it?" asked the king.

"Yellow, like mine," responded Martin.

"Then color mine that way at once, please," said Gumbo. "I've always wished to be different from the common people, and that'll do it."

Martin readily complied with the royal demand and soon had the king's long locks looking like the

ASTRANGE ENCOUNTER WITH FEROCIOUS MOSQUITOES—A WONDERFUL HAIR RESTORER. WON FAVOR OF CURIOUS MEN

tresses of a soubrette on her first night.

His hair was a golden corn-color throughout, but it used up the entire bottle, and Martin told him to enjoy it while it lasted, for in time its glory would pass away and there was no more to be procured. The king immediately went out and showed himself to his people and they were stricken dumb with amazement and awe. He looked like an ebony and gold statue and the natives simply worshiped him, expecting him to sprout wings next and soar in the air. They were convinced that he was a different being, and that's what he desired, so all were very happy and contented. The king asked Martin to remain with them and get married at once, offering to help him pick out a wife, but when the boy told him that he had promised to marry a girl at home the monarch didn't insist, and Martin was very much relieved, indeed.

Gumbo took him out driving behind his team of zebras and they went fishing in the beautiful lakes of the country, where they had great sport, and each morning the people rejoiced more and more as they realized that the terrible mosquitoes were defeated. Martin filled the peroxide bottle with hair-seed to take home to Uncle Amos one day while out driving, and he noticed also that his own curly locks were growing long very rapidly, although he always wore his cap.

Several days passed in feasting and pleasure of every kind and Martin was enjoying his visit exceedingly, for the natives were very nice. Each morning the mosquitoes had gone away madder and thinner than ever and buzzing louder, and each day the people had rejoiced more in their relief. Men who had not slept for years now grew fat, and poor little babies which had been tapped again and again of almost every drop of blood by the awful insects were beginning to coo and crow in contentment, and the king said that if it were not for the haunting dread of the Wampangus they would be completely and utterly happy.

THE AWFUL ANIMAL KILLED

The very next night after he had said this the terrible Wampangus was reported to be approaching the village and all the people were filled with terror, fleeing this way and that in blind fright. As the animal was sure to attack as soon as darkness fell each family trembled, for no one knew where he would go first nor who would be the victim. It grew darker and darker slowly, and then suddenly the wailing howl of the animal was distinctly heard in the gloom of the forest near the village.

A wild cry went up in answer and all covered in the dusky shadows. But as the animal came nearer and some of the people who lived on the outskirts of town were just able to distinguish its figure in the shade of a clump of Strabismus trees, a wild yell arose from it. More yells and loud howls followed, and the Wampangus was seen to flee with all speed into the deep woods. Everybody wondered what had happened. Finally, after a long wait, during which the creature was momentarily expected to return, it was noticed by Martin that there were no mosquitoes outside of the windows. This was very surprising, but somebody then observed that since the Wampangus had disappeared the mosquitoes had vanished. So the flight of the animal was connected in some way with the insects, and all went to bed at last hoping it would not return.

It did not come back nor did the mosquitoes, but in the morning some early hunters going through the forest discovered a mass of hair, hide and bones beneath a tree, and, examining it carefully, they found that it was all that was left of the Wampangus.

The famished and infuriated mosquitoes had attacked him, and in spite of his struggles and howls of anguish had soon taken every drop of blood from him, and as there were so many millions of them they left nothing of him but the very toughest parts. Then in the afternoon another important discovery was made—that millions of dead mosquitoes lay on the lake's shore. Soon it was seen that somehow the blood of the Wampangus had proved fatal to the insects, for on going to drink after the feast they had dropped dead in whole rows. Not a mosquito was left in King Gumbo's dominions, and the land became a paradise to dwell in.

Martin lived there nearly a year before a ship came along, and he took passage for home. The king showered more gifts upon him, as did all the people, and he took aboard the ship more than a ton of gold, not to speak of pearls and ivory. He promised to come back to the village some day, and so they were not utterly heartbroken at his going, but gave three cheers as the ship sailed away.

When he reached home Uncle Amos almost had heart disease at sight of him, having long considered him as dead, but Martin told him that although he knew of the plot to throw him overboard he forgave him.

Uncle Amos was relieved. He told Martin that he had found valuable sardine oil on the property, but it needed an experienced man to extract it, and suggesting that he hire him to take charge of the work.

UNCLE AMOS' HAIR KEPT HIM BUSY

Martin agreed to do that, but Uncle Amos never did it. He had other work to attend to after that, and, too, he never had time for more plots, for this is what happened. He had been courting a girl for many years, and as he grew bolder she thought less and less of him. When Martin gave him the bottle of hair-seed he instantly rubbed it all into his scalp, enough, in fact, for an army of men, and at once hair began to sprout like water from a spigot. He was enveloped in a torrent of hair in two hours, and ever after that he was obliged to spend every blessed hour between meals in a barber's chair getting it cut. That's how Alec Di Vechia, the barber, got rich and went back to Italy as a prince.

Uncle Amos never got the girl, and so he was properly punished for his duplicity and cunning, while Martin, now wealthy as a king and as happy, spends all his time sailing over the world on a big steam yacht, not forgetting once a year to stop at the land of the Umpivallagas, where he always has the very best time of all and where he is going to take me when I can get a mouth off.

WALT McDUGALL